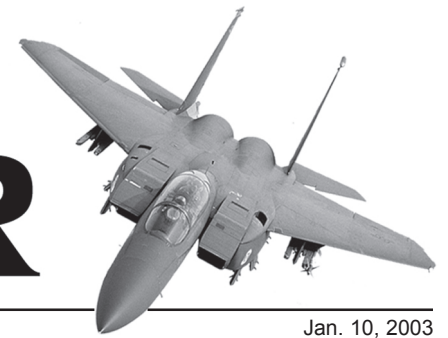


GULF DEFENDER



Vol. 62, No. 1

Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. *Gulf Defender*

Jan. 10, 2003

In brief

Courts-martial

Team Tyndall members have an opportunity to see military justice in progress. A court martial hearing is scheduled for 8 a.m. Monday and Tuesday in the base legal office, Building 662. The hearing is open to the public and may not last both days.

For more information, call 283-4682.

Hospital closure

All medical facilities, including pharmacies and clinics, will close at noon on the first Wednesday of each month for training instead of the first Thursday of each month as previously announced.

For information, call 283-7501.

Brunch at dining hall

The hours of operation at the Berg-Liles Dining Facility have changed for weekends and holidays to reflect the new brunch concept.

Hours of operation are 6 a.m. - 1 p.m. for brunch and 4:30-6:30 p.m. for dinner.

Brunch consists of breakfast items from 6-10:30 a.m. and then at 10:30 a.m., the lunch menu will be added to the line.

Customers will have their choice of breakfast items or main entrees from 10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. The dining facility staff hopes this accommodates their customers' needs. Feedback is encouraged.

Inside

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● Christmas debt got you down? ... **Page 9**

● Tae Kwon Do students earn promotions ... **Page 13**



Tech. Sgt. Dan Neely

Elite selection

Capt. Chris Snyder, Detachment 2, 28th Test Squadron, operates one of the unit's MiG 23 radar systems with Tom Maxwell, a radar engineer with contractor MacAulay-Brown. Captain Snyder recently learned he was selected to attend a very elite Air Force school. For more, see story on Page 8.

TRICARE files, computers stolen in Phoenix

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — Officials from the TRICARE Management Activity announced Dec. 23 that computer equipment and files were stolen Dec. 14 from its TRICARE Central Region health contractor, TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corp. in Phoenix.

TriWest contracts with the military health system to provide health services to servicemembers, their families and retirees. The equipment and files were used to help deliver health-care services to beneficiaries residing in Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada and far western Texas.

The total impact of the theft is still being assessed. The case is being investigated by the Defense Criminal Investigative Service,

FBI and other law-enforcement agencies.

Defense Department officials, after learning of the theft from TriWest on Dec. 20, began working with the company to ensure uninterrupted delivery of medical benefits.

TriWest has established a toll-free number and an e-mail address for TRICARE beneficiaries who have questions about what they need to know and do.

DOD officials have ordered all contractors working with the TRICARE system to assess their current physical and electronic security.

For further information, beneficiaries may call toll-free (888) 339-9378 or e-mail questions to computertheft@triwest.com.

New year poses new challenges for Team Tyndall

BRIG. GEN. LARRY NEW
325th Fighter Wing commander



Welcome back to the beginning of a new year that promises to be filled with plenty to do at Team Tyndall. I certainly hope everyone had ample opportunity to recharge their ‘batteries’ and is ready to launch 2003 in traditional Checkertail Clan style. Let’s start the year right by helping each other keep our New Year resolutions, work hard to sustain or improve on our performance in the wing from last year and face the new challenges with plenty of energy.

Our Checkertail Clan excellence will be key in one of the first opportunities we face, not too far down the road—Gulf Coast Salute 2003. Our annual open house and airshow is slated for March 22-23 and from all indications, it promises to be a great weekend. This is our chance to show our capabilities and professionalism, and will require a total combined team effort from Team Tyndall. I know the open house committee, led by Maj. John Melloy, is up to the task and will appreciate your support. This year our nation celebrates



“... **T**here’s a lot on the plate for 2003 and I look forward to working with you all to reach our goals and meet each challenge.”

BRIG. GEN. LARRY NEW
325th Fighter Wing commander

100 years of air-powered flight. Our open house is focused around this historic feat and looks forward to our future in air dominance. The theme is ‘Celebrating 100 years of powered flight, and the next generation of air dominance.’

Not long after we get the ramp cleaned up from the open house, we’ll be looking forward to a visit from the AETC Inspector General team for our Operational Readiness Inspection. This comprehensive look at our missions and people is our ‘report card’ and will give us a great opportunity to show everyone in the command what our wing is made of. Our ORI Prep Team, led by Lt. Col. Steve Kotan, will be helping units across the wing prepare for the visit and the compliance aspect, in or-

der to ensure we put our best foot forward. Also, our Exercise Evaluation Team, led by Lt. Col. Robert Weesner, will be helping us hone our skills in crisis response, security and deployment/employment. Now is the time to break out checklists, previous reports and cross-feeds from other bases so you can polish your programs. Let’s do all we can to ensure we are ready when the inspection team arrives.

The inspection team isn’t all that is due to arrive in 2003; our first F/A-22 Raptor is scheduled for delivery this summer as well. Lt. Col. Jeffrey ‘Cobra’ Harrigan and the men and women of the 43rd Fighter Squadron and F/A-22 Integration Office are working hard getting the new squadron and the wing ready for the arrival. We’re all looking

forward to the new mission, the challenges it brings and the opportunity to train America’s best pilots in the best weapons system.

Lastly, before closing I wanted to make mention of a new Air Force program that will begin at Tyndall this year. The program is called Heartlink. Its purpose is to help new military spouses better understand the demands placed on military members and the huge role spouses play in mission accomplishment. It will be conducted in one day classes in a small forum designed to facilitate open discussions and answer questions spouses may have while enhancing awareness of the Air Force mission and resources and services available to the spouse and family members. You will see more on the program in subsequent editions of the Gulf Defender. Spouses who have been associated with the military for less than five years and are interested in signing up for the program can contact the Family Support Center at 283-4204.

As you can see, there’s a lot on the plate for 2003 and I look forward to working with you all to reach our goals and meet each challenge. Have a great week!

Ready now ... ready always: Deployments may be near

ALPHONSO AVELINO-REYES
325th Mission Support Group

When we reflect on folks who have had a strong influence on our lives it is amazing how many coaches we played for who unknowingly provided lasting inspiration. One I recall in this light was my first football coach. His motto was: “Are you a pillar or a caterpillar”... meaning ... “Will you stand up and fight for your team and give your full measure or will you crawl away like a caterpillar when things get tough?” His timing when he used that phrase on us was impeccable and always overcame the tough moments when fatigue, pain or fear were starting to set in.

This motto is very appropriate at this time for Team Tyndall. As Brig. Gen. Larry New stated in the Nov. 15

edition of the Gulf Defender: “The Air Force expeditionary mission is the Air Force’s number one priority and we need to be ready to support our commitments; supporting AEF deployments by preparing and training our people to deploy, if necessary, is a top priority.” Since the creation of the new combat wing structure, the mission support group has become the hub for ensuring that we can indeed deploy and sustain our forces. Within the MSG, the Logistics Readiness Division orchestrates the planning/execution actions that result in successfully putting warheads on foreheads.

All good coaches know that how you practice is how you play. The purpose behind the wing’s Crown Prince 02-04 exercise was to demonstrate that all of the individuals identified to deploy and subject to be deployed

meet all the requirements necessary for deployment. A great deal of effort was exerted by commanders, unit deployment managers, security police, mission support, medical folks, civil engineering, services, chapel staff and senior leadership to top-off folks for deployment; however, in my opinion, the most important component for making sure we are ready to deploy is a personal RESPONSIBILITY. It is the first letter in the word Ready and Readiness. The Airman’s Manual states: “Although your organization may set up some kind of training and or/evaluation system based on this manual, the bottom-line responsibility for your professional well-being—especially deployed—rests with you.” The “E” in ready stands for exercises. The more real-world the better to be an

●SEE READY PAGE 7

Gulf Defender Editorial Staff

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Capt. Chris Karns chief, 325th FW public affairs
Tech. Sgt. Dan Neely chief, internal information
2nd Lt. Albert Bosco public affairs action officer
Staff Sgt. Roel Utley editor
2nd Lt. Ryan Fitzgerald staff reporter
Teresa Nooney News Herald staffer

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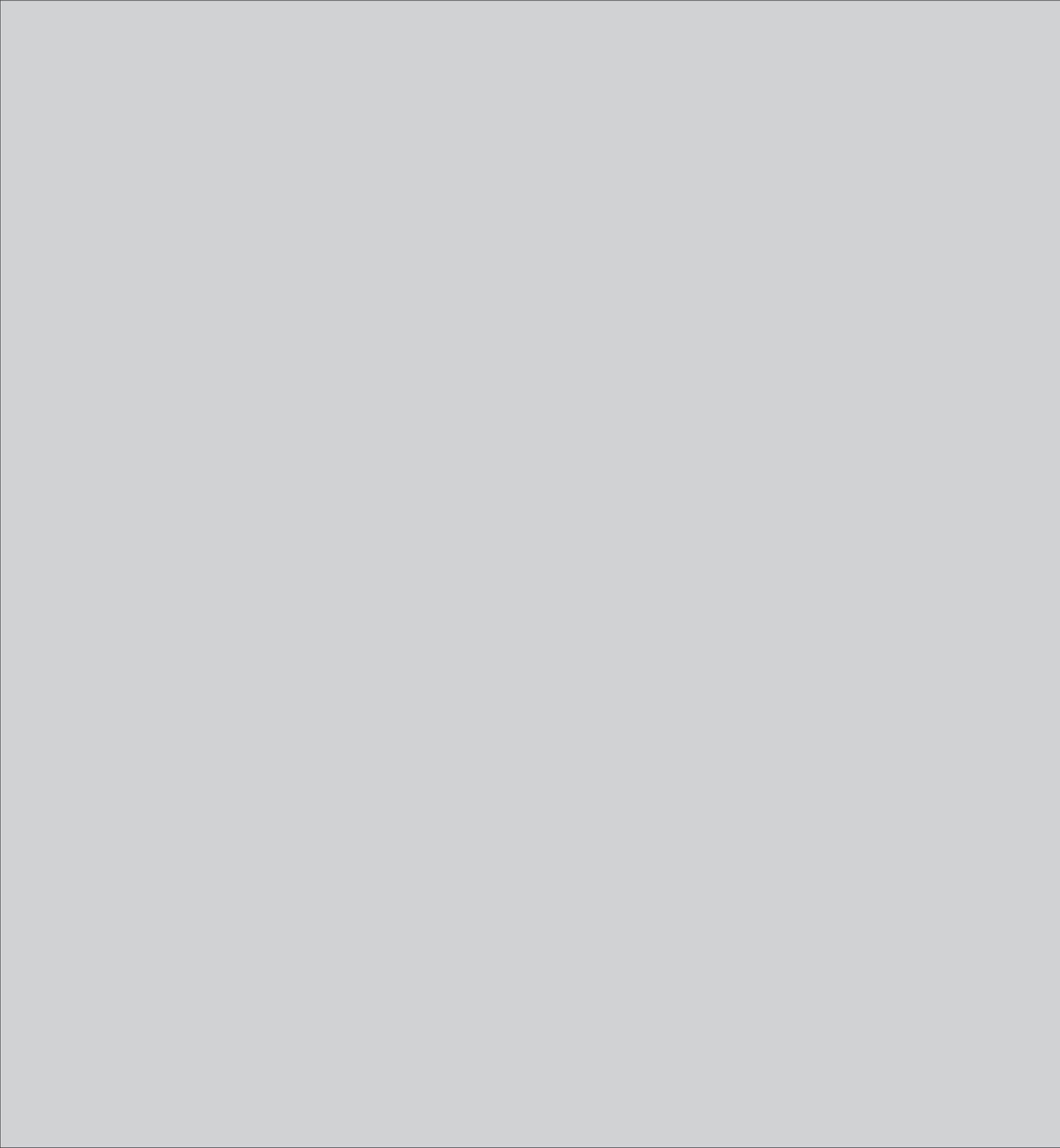
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Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the 325th Fighter Wing public affairs office. Photographs are U.S. Air Force photos unless otherwise noted.

The deadline for article submissions to the *Gulf Defender* is 4 p.m. Friday, prior to the week of publication unless otherwise noted. Articles must be typed and double-spaced, preferably on a 3.5-inch disc. Stories should be submitted directly to the public affairs office, Building 662, Room 129 or mailed to: 325 FW/PAI, 445 Suwannee Ave., Tyndall AFB, FL, 32403-5425 or emailed to editor@tyndall.af.mil. Public affairs staff members edit all material for accuracy, brevity, clarity, conformity to regulations and journalistic style. The delivery of the *Gulf Defender* to Tyndall base housing sections is provided by the *Panama City News Herald*.

For more information, or to advertise in the newspaper, call (850) 747-5000.



ARTICLE

15s

The following adverse actions took place here in December.

Article 15s:

■ An airman first class from the 325th Air Control Squadron was given 15 days extra duty for misuse of his government travel card.

■ An airman first class from the 325th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron was reduced to airman basic for wrongful use of marijuana.

■ An airman first class from the 325th MXS was reduced to airman and given a reprimand for failure to maintain sufficient funds in a bank account to cover checks.

■ A senior airman from the 325th Security Forces Squadron was reduced to airman first class, forfeited \$100 pay for two months, received 30 days extra duty, and was reprimanded for driving under the influence and reckless driving.

■ A staff sergeant from the 325th SFS was reduced to senior airman, forfeited \$250 pay for two months, received 30 days extra duty and a reprimand for larceny.

■ An airman first class from the 325th SFS was reduced to airman, forfeited \$200 pay for two months, received 30 days extra duty and a reprimand for wrongful use of marijuana.

■ A senior airman from the 325th SFS was reduced to airman first class, forfeited \$200 pay for two months, received 30 days extra duty and a reprimand for breaking a no contact order and giving a false official statement.

■ An airman basic from the 325th MOS forfeited \$500 pay for two months for underage drinking and being drunk on duty.

(Courtesy base legal office)

Re-enlistments

The following individuals re-enlisted in December.

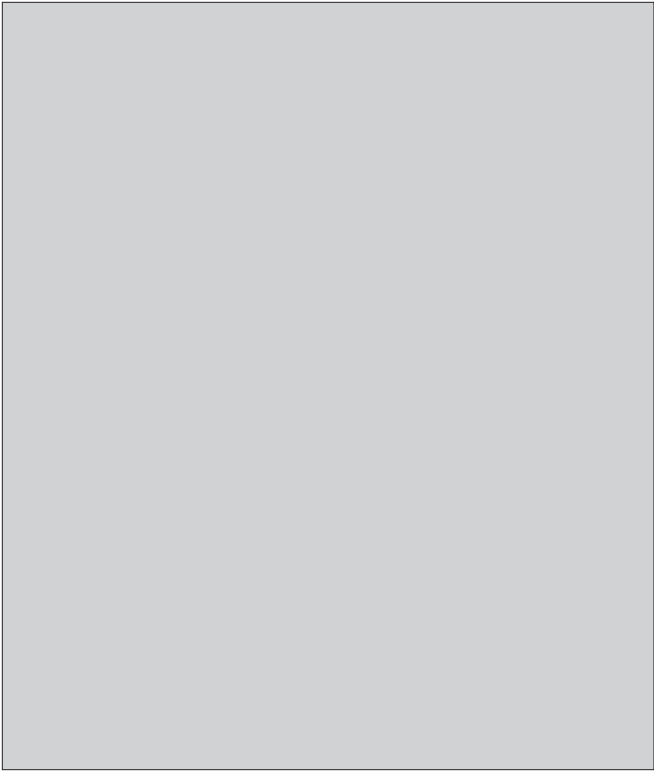
- Staff Sgt. Thomas Allen Jr., 325th Aeromedical Dental Squadron
Tech. Sgt. Stephanie Brown, NCO Academy
Senior Master Sgt. Mark Charles, 325th Communications Squadron
Senior Airman Carlos Colon-Otero, 325th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
Senior Master Sgt. Robert Cox, 83rd Fighter Weapons Squadron
Tech. Sgt. Gerald Davis, Det. 1, 823rd RED HORSE Squadron
Tech. Sgt. Lisa Dean, 325th Medical Group
Tech. Sgt. Brian Downer, 325th AMXS
Master Sgt. Brian Hampton, 325th Maintenance Group
Master Sgt. Jeffrey Haun, 325th MOS
Tech. Sgt. Erick Johnson, Area Defense Counsel
Staff Sgt. Rocky Magee, 325th CS
Master Sgt. Mark Peters, NCOA

- Tech. Sgt. Mark Redmon, 325th CS
Tech. Sgt. Frank Rohrig Jr., 325th MDSS
Master Sgt. Cynthia Siples, 325th MOS
Tech. Sgt. Mark Thames, 325th MXS
Tech. Sgt. Dawn Weis, 325th ACS



Courtesy photo

Second Lt. Keith Benko, 95th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, gives the oath of enlistment to his father, Chief Master Sgt. Robert Benko, Air National Guard 126th Air Refueling Wing command chief, during a re-enlistment ceremony Dec. 22 at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.



Sergeant Smith is awarded the Checkertail Salute Warrior of the Week award by Brig. Gen. Larry New, 325th Fighter Wing commander.

The Checkertail Clan salutes Sergeant Smith, who created Defense Message System operational reporting templates that reduced formatting errors by 40 percent. He also modernized console operations

Checkertail Salute

Staff Sgt. Jeremy Smith

Duty title: Command post security manager
Unit: 325th Fighter Wing
Time on station: 2 years
Time in service: 8 years
Hometown: Waterville, Ohio
Hobbies: Pencil drawing, sports and computers
Goals: Complete my CCAF degree and make chief
Favorite thing about

Tyndall: The outstanding people I get to work with.
Pet peeves: Inattention to cleanliness, organization and the Air Force uniform
Favorite book: "The Art of War"
Favorite movie: "The Hunt for Red October"

by designing and computerizing data logs. This allows controllers instant access to vital data.

The Checkertail Salute is a 325th Fighter Wing commander program designed to recognize Tyndall's Warrior of the Week. Supervisors can nominate individuals via their squadron and group commanders. Award recipients receive a certificate, letter from the commander and a one-day pass.



Slips, trips, falls

Don't let it be you

TECH. SGT. MICHAEL GRIFFITH
325th Fighter Wing ground safety

Did you know that slips, trips and falls constitute the majority of general industry accidents? In the United States, they cause 15 percent of all accidental, job-related deaths and are second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

So how can people remain safe while at work? Some of the most frequently overlooked general safety precautions involve good housekeeping.

Keep all corridors, passageways, storerooms and service areas clear of debris. Never block these areas, even temporarily. Emergencies don't usually come with advance warning and are not likely to give you enough time to clear cluttered exit routes. Keep stairwells clear at all times. Do not store boxes, files or other debris in stairwells or landings.

Report uneven, defective flooring, worn spots in carpets, chipped tiles and worn stair treads to supervisors. In areas where wet or damp conditions are likely to routinely exist, appropriate drainage should be evaluated and considered for control or prevention of slippery conditions.

A little common sense goes a long way in safety. You can reduce your risk of injuries from slips, trips or falls with a little vigilance over the common things many of us take for granted, such as the way we sit in a chair, or the way we walk up or down the stairs.


Look around your work area for hazards and work to prevent them. Supervisors, remember it is your responsibility to ensure your workers have a safe and healthful work place.

Caption contest



Submit an entry for this month's Safety Caption Contest and win a free lunch from the 325th Services Squadron! Send your caption to 2nd Lt. Brian Smart at 283-4231 or e-mail the safety office.

Last month's winner

 "Son — if I told you once, I told you a thousand times — cut the firewood up **FIRST** before loading it into the darn truck!"

BOB SHINHOLT
King Aerospace



It's your heart ...



... where is it?

● FROM READY PAGE 2

accurate measure of our capabilities. The “A” stands for Air Expeditionary Force for which we train and exercise. The “D” stands for deployments. Lastly the “Y” stands for you ... the backbone of airpower.

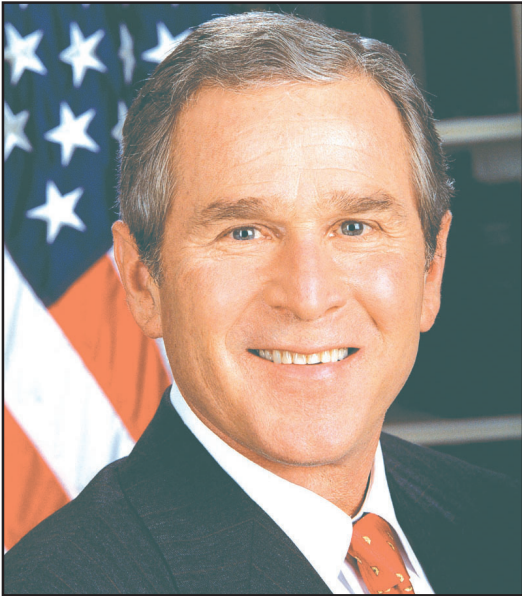
Some of the most important items you will be issued when you process for deployment is your “A”—general purpose, “B”—cold weather, “C”—chemical gear and for aircrews “D”—aircrew chem bags. At Tyndall, you will be provided another bag ... your

“W” bag. The “W” stands for Warrior.

The first thing you will find in that bag is Article VI of the Code of Conduct ... “I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.”

The next item is a mirror. Look in the mirror and ask yourself ... am I doing everything that I possibly can to get READY?

Leadership line



“(The terrorists) don’t value innocent life. They’re nothing but a bunch of cold-blooded killers, and that’s the way we’re going to treat them. They reach across oceans to target the innocent. They seek weapons of mass murder on a massive scale. The terrorists will not be stopped by mercy or by conscience, but they will be stopped. And they will be stopped by the will and the might of the United States of America.”

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH
During a Jan. 3 speech at Fort Hood, Texas

Thinking of getting out?

THINK AGAIN!

Make sure you’ve got all the facts first! Contact **Chief Master Sgt. Ron Georgia**, 325th Fighter Wing career assistance adviser, at **283-2222** for information on your career and its future.

Tyndall engineer to join elite group

2ND LT. ALBERT BOSCO

325th Fighter Wing public affairs

A member of one of Tyndall Air Force Base's tenant units recently received news that he was selected to attend one of the Air Force's most coveted aeronautical training programs.

Capt. Chris Snyder, Detachment 2, 28th Test Squadron test integration flight commander, was one of just 15 officers selected Air Force-wide to attend the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School at Edwards AFB, Calif., as a flight test engineer.

The school is a 48-week course of instruction, which consists of three closely related courses: experimental test pilot, experimental navigator and experimental flight test engineer. Together, these courses train selected officers in the latest methods of testing and evaluating aerospace vehicles and related systems.

These tests provide technical information on the suitability and performance of vehicles, systems and sub-systems and determine flight characteristics, per-

formance, stability and control, mission capability and mission suitability. According to the school Web site, finding people who are capable of planning and executing a well-devised flight test program is not easy. It is this facet that makes selection prestigious.

"The [Test Pilot School] selection process is highly competitive," remarked Lt. Col. Kristian Mackey, Det. 2, 28th TS commander. "Looking at the things he's done at Tyndall and previous assignments, I had no doubt he would be selected. [He] is going to do great things for the Air Force."

Captain Snyder, a 1996 Air Force ROTC graduate from Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., completed a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering from Cornell University and a master of science degree in aeronautical engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology.

"I've been fascinated with Test Pilot School ever since I first heard about it in AFROTC," said Captain Snyder. "The chance to fly in so many different air-

craft and become involved in the flight test process sounded too good to be true, and now, eight years later, I'm excited to begin applying my engineering background to actual flying."

According to Captain Snyder, the road to Test Pilot School is not easy, but not impossible either. To be considered for the school, applicants must possess a degree in mathematics, physics or engineering, with a cumulative grade point average of 2.8. Additionally, applicants must have a minimum of two years experience in one of the following Air Force specialty codes: 13XX, 14NX, 21AX, 21MX, 33SX, 61SX, 62EX and 63AX. Applicants must also be able to pass an annual Flying Class III physical.

For additional information on U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School requirements, refer to the Web site at www.edwards.af.mil/history/docs_html/center/test_pilot_school.html or <http://afas.afpc.randolph.af.mil/specfly/Announcements/01%20TPS%20Announcement.htm>.



Capt. Chris Snyder

Air Force goes to selection-based assignments for MTI, MTL

MASTER SGT. MICHAEL BRIGGS

Air Education and Training Command public affairs

Beginning in January, the Air Force will have the option of selecting nonvolunteers for special duty as military training instructors and military training leaders to fill vacancies.

Previously, only volunteers filled MTI and MTL slots.

"The selection-based assignment process will allow us to fill requirements when we don't have enough qualified volunteers," said Col. Mike Hudson, chief of the assignments division at Air Education and Training Command, the command that owns the majority of MTI and MTL positions. "This will ensure there is no mission degradation or manning gaps as we have encountered in the past."

The assignment selection change means MTI and MTL slots will be filled similar to other Air Force career fields; volunteers will be given first consideration and qualified nonvolunteers will be assigned to fill positions as needed.

Volunteers will be accepted year round and nonvolunteers will be selected only when necessary, Colonel Hudson said.

"There are about 520 MTI and 350 MTL positions in the Air Force," Colonel Hudson said. "Authorizations have been increasing as our annual accessions have increased, but we currently need approximately 60 MTIs and MTLs to fill projected vacancies."

The new MTI and MTL assignment process follows the September 2000 decision by the secretary of the Air Force and the Air Force chief of staff to make recruiter duty a selection-based rather than volunteer-based assignment process, said Col. Christopher Miller, director of assign-

ments for the Air Force Personnel Center.

"This change was the first step in instituting a culture change in the Air Force regarding the importance of special duties and their impact on the enlisted corps," Colonel Miller said. "The next logical step is to include MTI and MTL duties."

Senior airmen through master sergeants, with less than 16 years on active duty, stationed at stateside bases will be in the eligibility pool for the assignments. Those in joint and special duty positions, such as instructors, will not be considered.

Under the new process, officials will develop a roster that prioritizes nonvolunteers based on the date they arrived at their current duty station. The roster, combined with basic qualification criteria for the special duty career field, will determine who gets selected. Once selected, people must complete associated paperwork to determine their qualifications.

"This is no different than any other assignment, which requires documentation to validate individual qualifications," Colonel Miller said. "To ensure successful implementation, we need maximum support at all levels concerning procedural and philosophical changes to the MTI and MTL selection process. Commanders' support and understanding by enlisted members in the field are critical."

"As our enlisted assignment system evolves to keep pace with our changing Air Force culture, we all need to recognize that special duties like MTI and MTL are rewarding, integral parts of an NCO's career path," he said.

To be eligible for assignment as an MTI or MTL, people must have a skill level commensurate with their grade and must be able to obtain 39 months retainability as of their

reporting month.

For MTI duty, senior airmen must have a minimum "General" aptitude quotient examination score of 48.

For MTL duty, people must not have an active unfavorable information file, be on a control roster or in any phase of the weight-management program. Also, senior airmen must be graduates of Airmen Leadership School. No specialty codes are exempt from the MTI and MTL selection process, and single parents and join-spouse couples are eligible.

MTI and MTL candidates are trained at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. MTIs receive training prior to their duty at Lackland, whereas MTLs first report to their gaining unit, where they will be scheduled for training.

MTL assignment locations include: Sheppard AFB, Texas; Keesler AFB, Miss.; Lackland and Goodfellow AFBs, Texas; U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.; Presidio of Monterey, Calif.; Port Hueneme, Calif.; Fort Gordon, Ga.; Camp Bullis, Texas; Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.; Pensacola NAS, Fla.; Vandenberg AFB, Calif.; Eglin AFB, Fla.; Gulfport, Miss.; Kirtland AFB, N.M.; Little Rock AFB, Ark.; Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md.; Corry Naval Air Station, Fla.; Fort Meade, Md.; Fort Huachuca, Ariz.; Hurlburt Field, Fla.; Altus AFB, Okla.; Fairchild AFB, Wash.; Fort Jackson, S.C.; Luke AFB, Ariz.; Maxwell AFB, Ala.; Fort Eustis, Va.; Pope AFB, N.C.; Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.; Dover AFB, Del.; Key West and Tyndall AFB, Fla.; and Yuma, Ariz.

For more information about MTI duty, contact the Recruit the MTI Team at DSN 473-1016. For MTL duty, call 2nd Air Force operations at DSN 597-1325.

Targeted civilian pay considered

GERRY GILMORE

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — Senior Department of Defense personnel officials think a different compensation system could be used to target pay to certain DOD civilians, much like the current military pay system provides extra money to some noncommissioned and commissioned officers.

Charles Abell, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, told reporters Dec. 23, "That's a free suggestion from us." He was acknowledging that the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget have priority over the management of government civilian-pay matters.

"We have made some recommendations just to help our friends at OPM and OMB, that we have found the targeted pay for the military to be so effective that we would recommend that they consider, if not in 04, then in the future, looking at how one might target civilian pay," Mr. Abell said.

Mr. Abell cautioned that the department would have to first devote more study to any civilian targeted-pay concept. DOD civilians received a 3.1 percent raise Jan. 1, 2003.

In other news, Mr. Abell noted that 2002 was a banner year for enlisted recruitment and retention with all the services making their quotas. The military still faces challenges keeping aviators, but he said that the services are doing a good job in a tough situation.

The deputy undersecretary also talked about an ongoing study of the Reserve components, which he said may be made public sometime in January. DOD officials, he said, could transfer some jobs now done by the Guard or Reserve to the active components, or recommend that particular skills be given to DOD civilians or contracted out.

At the same time, he added, DOD personnel officials are looking at ways to make the department's personnel-management operations more efficient. This, he said, involves looking at all of the jobs DOD civilians perform to determine whether those jobs are still valid in the 21st century or might be more efficiently done by the private sector.

He cautioned that the objective is not to contract out the jobs performed by the DOD's civilians, but to analyze how the workforce performs its missions and to make that workforce more efficient.

Credit card debt

Face those ghosts of Christmas past

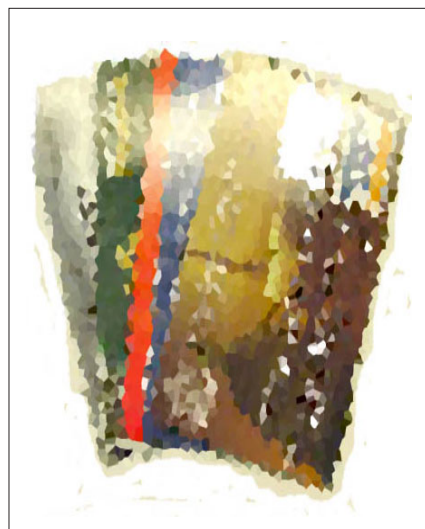
MICHAEL COYLE

Personal Financial Management Program manager

The past festive season may have left you with fond memories, but if you used plastic to do your holiday shopping you're about to be visited by the reminders of Mom's new robe, Dad's new tie, and the kids' new toys. The credit card statements are arriving! And you may feel as Scrooge did when he met his second ghost of the evening (the first being Marley) — the Ghost of Christmas Past has come to haunt you! If you planned for these incoming bills, fine. But if not, here's a strategy for dealing with them.

First is a two-parter: stop charging for a while (that's right, put your cards away and leave them alone) and then arrange your credit card statements in order from highest APR to lowest APR (that's annual percentage rate, and it'll be clearly printed somewhere on each statement).

Next, project your income and expenses separately for this month, next month and the month after. Some upcoming expenses are a given: auto payment, rent, cable television, insurance and others pretty much remain steady. But don't forget to also project the expenses that happen only every now and then — maybe you have an es-



timated tax payment due this month or maybe you need to register your vehicle in February, and so on.

Now that you have your separate income/outgo comparisons, consider two possibilities. First, if you got a raise this month, you might think of putting the extra money toward debt payments. And second, you'll probably be able to free up some money by trimming some of your adjustable expense projections (the ones over which we have some control, like recreation, entertainment, dining out and adult clothing). If either or both of those options are fruitful, press on with your debt payment plan. Here's how.

Plan to pay all credit card statements except the top-listed one (the one with the highest APR)

their minimum monthly payments. But plan to pay the top-listed debt its minimum payment *plus* any extra you've been able to free up with your expense trimming and/or with extra money from your raise. For example, if you are able to trim \$50 from this month's expenses, and you can spare \$10 from your raise, and the top-listed debt's minimum payment is \$15, you send in a check for \$75 (\$50 + \$10 + \$15). Who knows, if you come up with enough extra money, you may be able to pay off the debt all at once! But if not, repeat the process next month and the month after. Once the top-listed debt is paid, zero in on the next one and repeat the process, that is, all debts get their minimum payment except the top-listed debt which gets its minimum, *plus* what you can trim, *plus* what you can afford to donate from your raise, *plus* what you were previously sending to the former top-listed debt.

A caution: be patient! It takes time, and the higher your debts are, the longer it'll take. But the process will work so long as you can legitimately spare extra money to pay your debts.

Don't begin your new year by letting the holiday credit card debt phantoms get you down. Scrooge learned a lesson from his ghosts and you can from yours!

Tyndall preps for staff assistance visit

2ND LT. RYAN FITZGERALD

325th Fighter Wing public affairs

In an effort to maintain the safest flying and ground operations possible, the 325th Fighter Wing safety office will host safety inspectors from 19th Air Force here Tuesday through Jan. 17.

The safety office's staff assistance visit is designed to offer an independent look into the wing's safety compliance and procedures, said Ken Jolley, 325th Fighter Wing chief of ground safety. The inspectors will examine not only the safety office's records and programs, but Team Tyndall's compliance with safety initiatives such as seat belt use and commanders' safety briefings.

"The 19AF Safety SAV offers our office an opportunity to have experts from outside the wing review our safety practices and procedures and offer recommendations for improvement," said Lt. Col. James Riemans-Van Laare,

chief of wing safety. "We can then implement those recommendations to improve our safety programs at Tyndall."

Unit safety representatives may be inspected as well during the staff assistance visit. Mr. Jolley recommends ensuring unit safety program documentation is in order, safety bulletin boards are stocked with current information and safety management books have all the necessary information entered.

Tools such as staff assistance visits and internal inspections were key in the "excellent" rating the safety office earned during its last IG inspection.

"We're always looking internally and externally at improving our safety programs," said Mr. Jolley. "This visit is a way for us to do that."

"Better safety programs provide a safer environment for all Tyndall personnel and will lead to better results during the ORI," said Colonel Riemans-Van Laare.

AF changing high year of tenure

MAJ. JOHN THOMAS
Air Force Personnel Center public affairs

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPN) — Airmen serving in most enlisted ranks will now have an additional two years available to serve on active duty.

The change, effective Jan. 1 and approved by the secretary of the Air Force recently, is part of an initiative to retain enlisted people's skills and experience, Air Force Personnel Center officials said.

The revised high-year-of-tenure policy means senior airmen can serve up to 12 years of total service; technical sergeants up to 24 years; master sergeants up to 26 years; and senior master sergeants up to 28 years. Remaining unchanged are staff sergeants at 20 years and chief master sergeants at 30 years.

"Extending years in service will increase our ability to adequately sustain a highly skilled enlisted force and reduce experienced noncommissioned-officer shortages created by both the drawdown in the early '90s, and lower retention trends for the past several years," said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald Murray.

Seen as a good option for most airmen, later HYT dates may affect the status of assignments, promotions, re-

enlistments and evaluations for thousands of enlisted members, said officials.

"No one will be forced to stay longer, but a lot of people will be able to — if it fits their plans," said Master Sgt. Mike Hall, superintendent of retirements. "We encourage everyone near their high year of tenure to visit their local military personnel flight, especially those with planned or pending assignments, separations or retirements."

In the case of senior airmen, HYT dates will automatically be extended to 12 years, regardless of any scheduled separation date after Dec. 31. Those planning to leave the service soon may be allowed to continue to serve at their current duty location or be reassigned, based on Air Force needs, officials said.

Those airmen who have already spent government funds associated with a separation or retirement will be exempt from the changes, officials said. Typically that includes people who have already shipped household goods, a car, or if their families have already moved using government funds.

"This policy change gives the Air Force the flexibility to keep our experienced people longer. It's the right thing for the Air Force since we are a retention-based force," said Maj. Gen. John Speigel, who is in charge of personnel policy at the Air Staff. "It should help us alleviate increased stress on some of our career fields and, at the same time, relieve some recruiting and training requirements."

"We have a pretty comprehensive set of instructions, but each case may be a little different. We understand that," Sergeant Hall said. "It's best for everyone to be sure they understand how these changes will affect them personally."

"For instance, the system will not automatically set a person's retirement date based on the high year of tenure," he said. "And although members' HYT dates will be extended, that will not automatically extend their projected (dates of separation)."

The last revision of HYT dates was in 2001, according to officials. At that time, the maximum years of service for technical sergeants was increased from 20 to 22 years.

Policies associated with years of service and high year of tenure will continue to be reviewed periodically to ensure they are meeting the needs of the Air Force and Air Force people, officials said.

Help Us Conserve



YOU HAVE
the POWER®

DRUNK
DRIVERS



are not survivors!



Air Force prepares for major deployment

MASTER SGT. SCOTT ELLIOTT

Air Force Print News

WASHINGTON — Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld directed the deployment of additional forces to support operations Enduring Freedom, Desert Spring and possible future contingencies Dec. 24.

The additional active-duty forces in Air and Space Expeditionary Forces 7 and 8 as well as selected forces from AEFs 9 and 10 have been tasked to deploy in a message from the secretary.

The Air Force is organized into 10 AEFs for rotational deployment scheduling. A single AEF represents approximately six squadrons of fighter and bomber aircraft; C-130s Hercules and tankers; search and rescue personnel; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance forces; and the expeditionary combat support elements necessary to support and operate expeditionary bases.

Before these deployments, the Air Force had nearly two full AEFs supporting operations Northern Watch, Southern Watch and Enduring Freedom, and operating more than 12 expeditionary operating bases. The additional deploying forces will bring the total capability of Air Force deployed forces to nearly that of three full AEFs. This deployment will provide forces in the region a stronger set of capabilities. Deploying forces will be assigned to the two air and space expeditionary task forces currently operating in the region.

According to Maj. Gen. Tim Peppe, special assistant to the Air Force chief of staff for AEF matters, besides the

forces drawn from the AEFs, Air Mobility Command units and other “enabler” forces will play a major role in this deployment and any future operations.

“Given the unique environment we are operating in today, we expect our expeditionary combat support, such as services, combat communications, intelligence, security forces, civil (engineers) and others will be tasked at a level beyond three AEFs of capability,” he said.

Airmen and aircraft from the following Air Force bases have been identified for initial deployment:

— AEFs 7 and 8 including B-1B Lancers from Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., and HC-130s from Moody AFB, Ga.;

— AEFs 9 and 10 including F-15C Eagles from Langley AFB, Va.; F-16 Fighting Falcons from Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany; HC-130s from Moody AFB, Ga., and HH-60 Pave Hawks and Predator unmanned aerial vehicles from Nellis AFB, Nev.

Air and space expeditionary wings and enabler forces include F-15E Strike Eagles from Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C.; E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar Systems from Robins AFB, Ga.; and AC-130 Gunships, MC-130 Combat Talons and MH-53 Pave Lows from Hurlburt Field, Fla.

Additional aircraft and people are included in the surge order, but units have not yet been identified. Pentagon officials said they will be notified as soon as possible.

**Your link
to what's going on**

Gulf Guide

**in the
Tyndall community**

JANUARY

FRI
10

Munitions closure

The munitions storage area is closed to all customers today due to a change of munitions accountable systems officer 100 percent closed warehouse inventory. Only valid emergency issues will be processed during this period. For more information, call munitions operations, 283-4010 or 283-2374.

Optical shop opening

The Tyndall Optical Shop opens today in the main exchange. The optical shop will be open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Saturday and will be closed Sundays. For more information, call 286-2355.

Embry-Riddle registration

Today is the last day to register for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's spring term. For more information, call the education center, 283-4557.

SUN
12

Chapel religious education

The Tyndall Chapel offers religious education 9:30-10:30 a.m. Sundays for Protestants and 11 a.m.-noon Sundays for Catholics. Both sessions will be held at the spiritual fitness building. For more information, call 283-2925.

MON
13

Barbershop closure

The barbershop located in the main exchange building will be closed for repairs Monday and Tuesday. The flightline barbershop will be open and can be reached at 283-4917.

TUE
14

Parenthood-preparation class

A four-session preparation for parenthood course will be 3-5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 21, 28 and Feb. 4 in the life skills support center, Building 1305. The course covers basic infant care, feeding options, stress management, medical care of the newborn and the development of the older infant. For more information or to sign up, call family advocacy, 283-7272.

Boating skills course

The Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 16 boating skills and seamanship course is 7-9 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday

evenings in Gulf Coast Community College's Student Union East building, Gibson lecture hall, Room 231. The core portion of the course begins Tuesday and ends Feb. 11, and the entire course ends March 4. The cost is \$40 for the new text and workbook. The course completion certificate reduces boating insurance rates with most insurance companies and meets Florida requirements for those born after Sept. 30, 1986 to operate a vessel with 10 or more horsepower, including personal watercraft. For more information, call John Clark, 271-3828, or visit the Flotilla Web site at: <http://clik.to/USCGAUXFlotilla16>.

WED
15

'Moms, Pops & Tots'

The "Powerful Parenting for Moms & Pops of Tots," group will meet from 9-10:30 a.m. on Wednesdays at the community activities center, Building 1027. Parents are asked to bring a snack for their child and a toy that he or she can share with another child. For more information and cost, call Ms. Bonnie Fuller, 283-5812, or Ms. Karen Blood, 874-0292.

NOTES

Project officer needed

A project officer is needed for planning a Women's History Month celebration or event to be held in March. The military or civilian employee who volunteers will be appointed by the 325th Military Equal Opportunity office by Feb. 1. For more information, call Staff Sgt. Darryll Woodson, 283-2739, or Staff Sgt. Tonisha Layne, 283-2751.

Theater closure

Due to structural failure, the 325th Civil Engineer Squadron has advised that the base theater will be closed until repairs can be made.

Service station bay hours

The service station bay has extended its hours of operation as follows: 6-7:15 a.m. Monday-Friday – walk-ins; 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday-Friday – appointments only; 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday – appointments only; 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday – appointments only. For more information, call 286-5826.

PME instructor vacancies

The Tyndall Noncommissioned Officer Academy has immediate vacancies for Professional Military Education instructors. The positions are open to technical sergeants and technical sergeant selects who have completed the NCO Academy in-residence and have at least an associate's

degree. The special-duty assignment is a three-year controlled tour. For more information, call Senior Master Sgt. Stephen Mihal, 283-3238.

Housing office hours

The 325th Civil Engineer Squadron's Housing Flight office hours are now 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Monday-Wednesday and Friday; and 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Thursday. The housing office will be closed Thursday mornings for training.

AADD program

The Airmen Against Drunk Driving program is designed to provide military members with a free, safe ride home within the local area. The AADD phone line is staffed with E1 through E4 volunteers who can be reached by calling 867-2233. AADD stresses complete anonymity to ease fear of retribution.

RETIREE NEWS

Homestead tax exemption increase

In May 2002, Governor Bush signed legislation that would increase the homestead tax exemption from \$500 to \$5,000 for veterans rated from 10 percent to 90 percent service-connected disability beginning in tax year 2003. According to personnel in the Bay County Tax Appraiser's office, veterans currently receiving the \$500 exemption will automatically receive the new \$5,000 exemption for 2003. If you are not currently receiving the \$500 exemption, you need to apply for the new exemption. To do this, you must present a copy of your rating decision from the Department of Veterans' Affairs or documentation from the military service department to the property appraiser.

TRICARE handbook

The new TRICARE handbook is now available for distribution to beneficiaries and providers worldwide. The handbook highlights all three TRICARE options – Prime, Standard and Extra - and the many health-care programs and benefits added since the 1997 edition. The handbook is available in the Tyndall Retiree Activities Office, the Benefits and Counseling office in the main clinic and at the TRICARE Service Center.

YARD SALE

The following yard sale is scheduled for Saturday: 3418 Smith St. All yard sales are held between 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

CLASSIFIEDS

Kenmore extra-capacity washer and dryer, almond color, \$325 or best offer. Just moved into new house and don't need the extra set. Call 871-4567.

Audio gear: Three Rotel RB850 amplifiers, \$150 each. Two 18" high current subwoofers with enclosure, \$150 each. DBX 3BXIII Dynamic Range expander, \$175. DBX 120X Subharmonic synthesizer, \$125. ADC EQ with display, \$95. For more information, call 872-9790 evenings or leave message at 527-3485 (cellular).

Camera found at Under the Oaks park on Friday, Jan. 3. Call to identify, 872-9790 or 527-3485 (cellular).

Several students promoted at Tyndall Tae Kwon Do

Several Tyndall Tae Kwon Do students recently earned promotions. "The test was a great success," said Erick Johnson, Tae Kwon Do instructor.

"All 10 of the students vying for promotion passed the test. Students being tested ranged from middle school age to seasoned parents competing for ranks from yellow belt to blue belt," Mr. Johnson said. The results of the test are as follows:

Promotion to yellow belt (10 gup): Maria Ritchie.

Promotion to green belt (eight gup): Patrick Moates, Steven Moates, Candace Moates, Andrew LaRoche, Kirsten Pecua and Ron Taylor.

Promotion to blue belt (six gup): Josh Casey and Travis Prall

Promotion to blue belt (five gup): Brent Ritchie

There are 10 gups or under-black-belt rankings that students must work through to earn a black belt. The numbers of the gup ranks count down from 10 to one.

Also, according to Johnson, Taylor performed his techniques rather well and was promoted with a "plus" on his exam. It is customary for the student who performs the best during the exam to be awarded a "plus" on his test results.

"Mr. Taylor demonstrated outstanding dedication to his training and desire to succeed. He is only able to attend classes once or twice per week and still shone over many others testing at the same level. This shows me that he has spent a lot of time training outside of class. He is an inspiration to us all," Johnson said.

According to Johnson, three other outstanding performers, LaRoche, Prall and Ritchie, displayed extraordinary skill and dedication to their training and were promoted up two belt levels at this test.

The test results and promotions are certified by the American Karate Black Belt Association-Chin Sook Hage Kwan. Johnson currently holds a third-degree black belt in Chung Do Kwan-Tae Kwon Do and a first-degree black belt in Okinawan Shudokan Karate. The training program consists mainly of basics, forms, self-defense and sparring. Additional techniques are introduced as the student progresses. Classes are held on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the community activities center ballroom. Class time is 6 p.m. Call the CAC at 283-2495 for more information.

(Courtesy Tyndall Tae Kwon Do)



Courtesy photo

Travis Prall (left) and Josh Casey demonstrate self-defense techniques.

Tigers take two from Eglin Eagles in weekend hoops action

The Tyndall Tigers Men's Varsity basketball team returned to the hardwood after their holiday break to take two hard-fought victories over the visiting Eglin Eagles in Southeastern Military Athletic Conference, SEMAC, action this past weekend.

Tyndall-68, Eglin-67

In Saturday's contest, Marcus Baucom and Chris Jackson scored 20 and 17 points respectively as the Tigers survived a furious Eglin rally to take the win. Tyndall jumped out early on the Eagles and led 40-27 at the intermission. In the second half, the Tigers encountered a scoring drought and saw Eglin battle back to take a 67-66 lead with 16 seconds remaining. Jackson then made two of the biggest plays in the contest. He first scored off of an offensive rebound with 4 seconds remaining to give Tyndall a 68-67 lead and then on the defensive end he blocked Eglin's Bobby Alexander's attempted lay-up to secure the victory for the Tigers.

Scott Moore and Omar Johnson tallied 11 and 10 points respectively for the Tigers. Johnson and Baucom led in both assists and steals with six and five respectively. Jackson and Moore led the Tigers in rebounding with 11 and 10 rebounds, respectively. Cory Fletcher led the Eagles in scoring with a game-



Courtesy photo

Lance Clark of the Tyndall Tigers goes for a three-point shot.

high 25 points.

Tyndall-60, Eglin-59 (OT)

Sunday's contest was nip and tuck from the outset as neither team enjoyed

a lead larger than four points during the entire game. Marcus Baucom again had the hot hand as he poured in 15 first-half points to lead the Tigers to a

30-28 lead at the half. In the second half the lead swung back and forth as neither team could mount a consistent offense to pull away. In crunch time, Tyndall's Omar Johnson sank two free throws to knot the score at 56-56 and force overtime. Overtime was a defensive struggle as all of the scoring came from the charity stripe. Tyndall's Johnson and Tommy Nixon each converted two free-throw opportunities to give the Tigers a 60-59 lead with 14 seconds remaining to be played.

The Tigers defensive effort once again took away Eglin's options on offense and forced the Eagles to take a missed difficult shot at the buzzer. Tyndall increased their first-place lead to three games.

Baucom led the Tigers in scoring with a game-high 19 points, followed by Lance Clark and Omar Johnson with 10 points each.

Marvin Gamble had a dominating game as he pulled down a team-high 14 rebounds; Johnson and Baucom led in both assists and steals with six and four respectively and Scott Moore had three blocked shots. The Tigers will travel to Biloxi, Miss., this weekend to challenge the Keesler Dragons in SEMAC action.

(Courtesy Tyndall Tigers)



Funshine NEWS



January 10, 2003

This page is produced by the 325th Services Marketing office, 283-4565.

Tyndall's All Ranks

Seafood Extravaganza

At the Tyndall O Club

Friday, January 10
5:30-8:30 p.m.

Market Price: \$18.95*
Children ages 6-11: \$9.95*
5 & Under: \$4.95*

***Members First!**
Show your club card to receive a \$3 discount.

Call for more information
283-4357

Bonita Bay

☎ 283-3199

Swim with the Manatees

Feb. 9-12, Cost per person is \$185 and includes 3 nights accommodations, transportation, 2 half day boat rentals, wet suit, dry bag, mask, fins, snorkel, admission to Homosassa State Wildlife Park and Tampa State Fair. \$25 non-refundable deposit now reserves your seat.

Have a Birthday Party at Raptor Lanes



Economy Party - \$22 ■ Custom Party - \$39
Deluxe Party - \$59
Birthday child must be 16 years old or younger. Your child will love the "Bowland" 3-D Animated Graphics. They're awesome!

283-2380

Youth Center

☎ 283-4366

Baseball/Softball Registration

Open to all youth ages 5-14 yrs. Deadline for sign up is Feb. 8. Early sign up is advised. Call for more information.

Free Baseball Clinic - Jan. 25

1-3 p.m. Open to all youth 9 yrs. and older. Coach Darren Mezaroski and his staff from GCCC will give a one-day baseball clinic. Call for details.

On Base Food Delivery

■ **Evening Menu:** Fri. & Sat. 5:30-9 p.m.

■ **Lunch Menu:** Mon.-Fri. 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Limited to office deliveries (i.e. squadron addresses)

Subs & Pizzas

286-2900

325th Service Squadron

Let Us Know How We Are Doing

283-4506

All Ranks Lunch at the O' Club

Unlimited access to the daily buffet, salad bar, fountain soda, tea & coffee! 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Includes:
Fresh Hot Carved Meat Sandwiches on Kaiser Roll

Featuring:
A creative blend of individualized buffets rotated each day
Soup of the Day
Dessert Bar



Mon.-Thurs.: \$6.95
Friday: \$7.95

Mondays Chef's Choice
Tuesdays Italian
Wednesdays Oriental
Thursdays All American
Fridays Seafood

*Members, show your club card to receive a \$1 discount!

283-4357

SUPER BOWL
TAILGATE PARTY
@ the CAC Pizza Pub
January 26



Tailgate Party Starts @ 3 p.m.
Game Starts @ 5 p.m.

Come early and get a good seat or see you at the kick-off!

All Ranks at the O' Club Super Sunday Brunch!

January 12, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

\$8.95* Champagne Available - add \$3

Menu Includes:

- Carving Station
- Sausage
- Omelets (made to order)
- Bacon
- Belgian Waffles
- Hash Browns
- Fresh Fruit
- Muffins
- Danish
- Biscuits & Gravy

*Members, show your club card to receive a \$1 discount!



Community Activities Center Pigskin Picks

Congratulations to our Pigskin Picks 3rd heat winners

1st Place: Willie Sheppard
(Gas Grill)

2nd Place: Eric Appletoft
(Remote cooking thermometer and timer)

Sponsored in part by:
AAFES, Hodge Barb-Que & The Chef's Shop.
No federal endorsement of sponsors intended.
Call for more information:

283-2495

Gourmet Coffee
Coming Soon to the CAC!

Teen Center

☎ 283-0295

Lock-In

Jan. 18, 7 p.m.-7 a.m.

Food, door prizes, music, pool and basketball tournaments. Call for details.

Passport to Adventure

Validate Your Passport NOW
for a Chance to Win These Great Prizes:

A Cruise for 2 on the Riviera
A Cruise for 2 on the New England Coast
To get your passport and information on how to play stop by Information, Tickets and Travel or call:

283-2499

Sand Dollar Inn

Lodging rates for international students (IMET students only) have changed.

The new rates are:

VOQ/VQ:	\$24.50
VAQ:	\$21.00
TLF:	\$35.00
DVOQ:	\$37.50
DVAQ:	\$31.50
LDVOQ:	\$41.00

Lodging Customer Service:
283-4211

Raptor Lanes
Base Championship

Bowling Tournament

January 18 at 10 a.m.



Open to all eligible Raptor Lanes bowlers.

283-2380

Sponsored in part by: Anheuser Busch, Columbia 300
No federal endorsement of sponsor intended.

Aero Club

☎ 283-4404

Private Pilot Ground School

Our next class begins on Jan. 13 and will run until March 21. Classes are on Mondays and Wednesdays 6-9 p.m. Call to see if you qualify for tuition assistance that covers all course materials.

‘Tis the sneezin’ season

CAPT. (DR.) ERIKA GEITNER
325th Medical Group

If you are one of the millions of Americans suffering from allergy symptoms or hay fever, you may wonder how you became cursed with such a miserable affliction. On the other hand, your symptoms may be simply a seasonal annoyance. Allergic reactions vary from person to person, from slight itching of the nose and eyes, to rashes and swelling of the skin, to a serious reaction that can cause breathing problems and possibly death.

But what are allergies? Allergies are an

immune response to certain chemicals or proteins to which the body is exposed. These substances can float in the air, such as pollen or dust, or they are found in medications or foods. They can also be found in the venom of insect stings or in commercial products such as latex. This abnormal immune reaction can develop at any age, even after several exposures to an allergen (substance causing an allergic reaction). Although it is not known why some people develop allergies and some do not, family history is a good predictor of a person’s tendency to be allergic.

How do people know if they are allergic? Many patients complain to their doctor of chronic congestion, runny nose, sneezing and itching of the eyes. These symptoms may predominantly occur during certain times of the day, certain seasons of the year, or upon exposure to pets or dust. Paying attention to when your symptoms are worst can help your doctor educate you about specific triggers and how to avoid or prevent them. Some patients may be candidates for skin testing or blood tests to determine the triggers of their allergies. People who have serious symptoms such as wheezing, difficulty breathing, swelling of the lips or tongue or any reaction involving the whole body, should see a health-care provider immediately.

What can be done to treat allergies? The best treatment is to avoid exposure to whatever is causing the symptoms. In reality, this is not always possible. Many patients will need to use medications to control their symptoms. These may include antihistamines such as the over-the-counter medications. Although these are effective for symptoms of sneezing and itching, they do not relieve congestion and can also cause drowsiness. Newer antihistamines, which are prescription only, are less likely to cause drowsiness and do not have to be taken

as often as the over-the-counter antihistamines, but can be more expensive. Nasal steroids can be used alone for symptoms or combined with an antihistamines. They are effective for sneezing, runny nose and congestion, but need to be used consistently in order to be effective. However, they may also cause nasal irritation or nosebleeds. The above medications are the most common ones used for allergy symptoms, but there are other medications that can help as well. Finally, immunotherapy (allergy shots) is a possible treatment for certain patients whose symptoms are not controlled with allergen avoidance and medications. The purpose of immunotherapy is to lessen a person’s sensitivity to a specific trigger. This therapy involves a significant time commitment (three to five years) as well as the risk of serious allergic reactions from the shots themselves. However, if effective and tolerated, immunotherapy can decrease or eliminate the need for medications, and potentially “cure” allergy symptoms. See your health-care provider if you are interested in learning more about allergies and their treatment. You may also want to look on the Internet at www.aaaai.org for more information from the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

